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PRISONER OF WAR

BY

ANDRÉ WARNOD

With 60 Sketches by the Author

TRANSLATED BY M. JOURDAIN



PHILADELPHIA : J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

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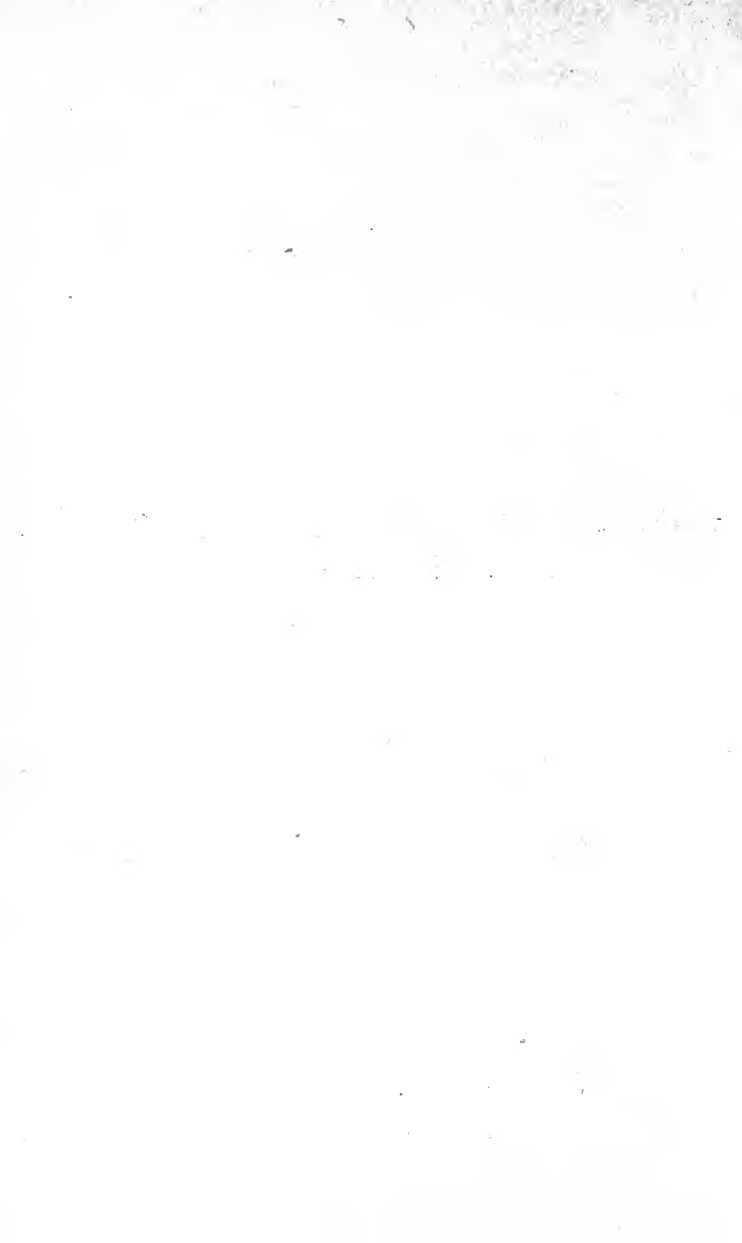
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FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO
THE CAMP





PARIS again, with its streets, where one can walk where one likes, and its restaurants, where one can eat what one pleases, its real houses, real laughter, and real bread ! There it is, after seven days and seven nights in the train. I look at my ragged and buttonless overcoat, with its strap pinned on by a safety pin, and the dirty strip of stuff which was once my red cross *brassard*, and I fancy it is all a dream.

People ask me to "tell them all about it." That isn't easy ; just at present I am afraid of losing grip of my will and memory. I think I have lost the taste for writing, just as I have lost the taste for good tobacco and good wine. These last two days I have been constantly asked what I thought of such and such a wine

or cigar. I tell you I don't "think" anything at all. I have lost the habit of such flavours, and it is only by degrees that I shall begin to understand them again. Give me time. . . .

In the same way I must have time to think before telling my story. For the moment I can only see the past—all that happened nine months ago—through a mist of confused impressions, with here and there some quite unimportant event in clear relief against it. I can see the bustle and hurry of mobilisation, our start from the barracks, our marching through Nancy, and people crowding round us with fruit and wine and flowers; there was a dahlia or a rose stuck in every man's gun-barrel, Then the strains of the *Marseillaise* and the *Chant du Départ*. We were covered with sweat and dust, and women embraced us. Then, and for the first time, I had a feeling that we were on our way to things heroic and difficult—things we *had* to do, however difficult. And then on we went again, and here my recollections become confused—a medley of crossing

the frontier and tearing down the frontier posts ; the first sound of the guns ; the first fusillade ; the men who fell, who had to be left behind our lines ; the Boches in flight ; the intoxication of advancing ; and then the sudden halt at Morhange. Why did we stop there ? I have not the least idea ; a private soldier never has. I remember marches and counter-marches at night, heartrending marches on roads crowded with troops, among dragoons, gunners with their guns, carts of all sorts, and ambulances and wounded men who were being attended to. Then we fell back, and at the Grand Couronné de Nancy we were told to halt. There was a rumour that the enemy was quite near, and that he must not be allowed to advance any farther. There was a battle, and I can see Chasseurs and colonial troops dashing on before us, through the din of battle, with their bayonets, and that was the last we saw of them. We were told that the Bavarian troops in front of them were giving ground. The noise of the guns was terrible, and we dug

trenches with bullets whistling around us. Days went by ; we were still waiting, and every evening after the day's bombardment we saw a village in flames. They all flared up, one after the other. Would our village we were holding be spared ?

No, its turn soon came ; and a shell fell on the hospital, and several of our wounded were killed, and then the church ! . . . I can see the ornaments of the altar scattered in the road, and the windows as full of holes as a spider's web, and above it all the torn and riddled carcase of the belfry. All the time the unceasing thunder of the guns made one dizzy. We were told we were near a place the Germans wanted to take, which we were to defend at all costs. The Chasseurs had been fighting like mad for two days, and we were sent at night to relieve them. We crawled to their position, and crept into their trenches, which were covered with branches. Later we were told that the Kaiser was there watching us and awaiting a triumphal entry into Nancy.

We were fairly comfortable in the trench, which was covered with branches and leaves. Bullets passed overhead, almost without touching us. From time to time there was an attempt at an attack, and the grey helmets came on. Then the word of command, "Fire!" and we saw men dropping and hurrying back. We were full of confidence, almost cheerful.

And then I see the comrade who suddenly ran towards us through the ever-increasing din of the cannonade. There was blood on his face, and he told our captain that a neighbouring trench had given way under shell-fire, and that we were outflanked and would be rolled up. Then we saw them advancing on our right, with their bayonets, and pouring a steady rain of bullets upon the trench which we had to abandon. It was an awful moment. To get away from this infernal spot and take up another position we had to cross a strip of ground rather more than two hundred yards across. There was nothing for it but to face

the steady concentrated fire, which took a heavy toll of us. A man dropped at every step of the way, and when we formed up to retake the trench we had lost, we looked round, and half the company was gone. Then we fell back again ; I still do not know why. I felt that the deafening machine-guns were tearing gaps in our ranks ; we were very hungry and thirsty and quite exhausted, but our *moral* was not bad. And I suddenly remembered our feelings when a small notice was put up on the door of the farm where we were billeted one evening long ago—an order from general headquarters to hold firm “ at any cost ” until a certain day in September that was mentioned. Only one week more ! We counted the days and hours. At last the time came, and the German menace, instead of pressing on, was rolled back. The Germans were not going to take Nancy ; they were in retreat. What could have happened ?

Before we followed them up the roll was called. My poor company ! Of our squad

only three were left. The lieutenants and corporals were all gone ; we had but one sergeant ; the *liaison* men, the hospital orderlies, and the stretcher-bearers were all killed. We had to have others at once, and I was chosen.

* * * * *

We were occupying villages which the Boches had abandoned ; and this inaction in this melancholy and deserted countryside, in these ruined villages, among these poor little pillaged houses and among these weeping peasants was worse than fighting. There was nothing much to do while we waited for the fighting to begin again, and that was bad for us. We had time to become down-hearted and think too much of home.

Then we got good news. We were to leave ! It seemed we were not wanted in the east, but should be useful in the north. So we started for the north. We were in good spirits again, without knowing why. The journey was pleasant, and at every station people crowded

round the trains into which we were packed, and cheered us and brought us drinks, food, flowers and tobacco. It was just the same when we reached our journey's end : we were taken possession of ; everybody was ready and willing to give us food and lodging. The Boches, apparently, were quite close. Meanwhile I was delighted to make the acquaintance of this land of plenty and land of Cockaigne, where one felt so proud of being a soldier, and so content to be alive.

Our joy was short-lived. Two hours after we detrained we were told that the Germans were attacking D——.

So we left the town to fight again. Then two days were spent in the hideous tumult and fever of battle, in picking up our wounded under fire. The second day the commanding officer came to the dressing station where I was and said that his battalion was evacuating the village, and that we must remove our wounded at once as best we could. A peasant woman lent us her horse, another a four-wheeled cart ;

the horse was put in and the cart loaded. It soon was full, and we set out, jolting along a road littered with dead bodies and wounded, with dead horses and limbers without drivers, and bordered with burning ricks. Shells were bursting round us; and I remember, like a picture, the commanding officer coming back, explaining something, and making signs. Our retreat was cut off, and the regiment quitted the road, and marched across country in good order to some destination unknown to me. But where should I take the cart, which had to keep to the road? I decided to drive straight on.

There was a village five hundred yards or so further on. Perhaps we should be safe there. So I lashed the horse I was leading, running as fast as I could to keep up with its gallop, under the fire of a German machine-gun which swept the road. The bullets whistled by, knocking up dust and pebbles around us, and rattling off the hood of the cart. We went on running as fast as we could.

Twice the horse was hit, and stumbled ; the third time he dropped. The machine-gun never ceased firing.

There was only one orderly with me, and together we lifted the wounded men from the cart and put them under cover behind a rick. Then we waited. The day seemed unending. The regiment had disappeared, and we were left alone by this deserted road, where the bullets were still whistling. One soldier, who was only slightly wounded, tried to join his comrades, and fell as he started to run. The machine-gun never gave us a moment's peace. Then evening fell, a fine late summer evening, bringing us a little coolness and darkness. Perhaps the firing would cease, and we could overtake our men. We would find a horse or push the cart, and get out of our difficulty somehow. But what was that ?

Two hundred yards from us, in the deepening twilight, appeared a row of dark silhouettes, which vanished again. We looked at them in utter astonishment. The machine-gun had

ceased firing. Then the black silhouettes appeared and vanished again. There was no possible doubt: it was the Boches. What was to be done? We were only a party of wounded, guarded by two unarmed men, and a dead horse. We waited for the final volley to make an end of us. Then a Chasseur, with his knees broken, had an inspiration. With a finger dipped in blood from his wounds, he traced a red cross on a handkerchief, tied it to the end of a bayonet, and waved it. We thought we were safe under this emblem, but we got a volley which went clean through our party, hitting no one. A sergeant pulled a rosary from his pocket and began to pray: "Let us commend our souls to God." Then the dark figures drew closer, and we could see the shape of their helmets. They were a hundred yards, then fifty, then twenty yards from us, and we could hear them speaking German. At ten yards distance three shadows came forward from the group, covering us with their rifles. One of them called out: "*Auf!*" I got

up, and clapping my armlet, answered : “ *Rothe Kreuz!* ” They surrounded us and ordered us to abandon our equipment and our knapsacks and march. So, slowly and painfully, the slightly wounded carrying or supporting the others, we entered the enemy’s lines. We were prisoners of war.

* * * * *

I can see the farm full of German soldiers busy emptying the cellar and drinking in silence. The barn was full of wounded men. We joined them, and a captain who spoke French ordered our money to be returned to us. All night long my comrade and I were busy attending to the wounded, both French and German, who were lying in a confused heap on the straw. We were allowed to keep our instruments, and we used the men’s first aid dressings.

At daybreak carriages and a section of German ambulance men arrived. Our wounded were removed, and I and the orderly, the only two unwounded, were marched off

between a corporal and soldiers with fixed bayonets. We did not know where we were being taken.

It was a sinister march as we four went silently on past houses either empty, or ruined, or mere smoking shells, where here and there a shrinking figure of a woman or child showed itself. And then the dead lying on the road, *our* dead! *Their* dead had already been removed. On all the doors were notices of billets written in chalk. Their soldiers were taking their ease, and going and coming in silence, or lounging in their grey uniforms in armchairs looted from the houses near by. We passed inns and grocers' shops which had been pillaged, and a cow lay dead in a field.

Our first halt was in the guard-room where we were taken. It was in a lawyer's office. The men greeted us without any apparent antipathy and gave us some of their food, but kept the wine they had stolen from the owner for themselves. The man in charge was fairly well educated. He talked to me about Munich,

and showed me photographs of pictures a friend of his had painted and also some vile picture postcards on which we Frenchmen were coarsely caricatured. He had a kindly smile, and really did not seem to see that he was offensive. Then came our examination. A staff officer entered and questioned us in perfect French about the position of our artillery, our fortifications, and the English army. We replied that we were in the medical service and knew nothing about these things. The officer did not press us, and merely said : " This war will be a long one, for after taking Paris we shall have to crush the Russians. But it will all be over in July."

The staff was quartered in the lawyer's house. We spent the night there, and next morning we were allowed to go into the garden. This was the sight which met our eyes : In front of the house a military van was drawn up, escorted by a party of unarmed soldiers in service caps. They went into the house, and others remained by the door, with hammers, a

bag of nails, and a saw. They very quickly knocked together large packing-cases, and the looting was silently and methodically carried on around these cases ; a piano went into them, the chairs, and a sofa. Every man was hard at work, sawing, hammering, fetching and carrying. Then the pictures were brought out, all well wrapped up, and fragile objects carefully packed in straw. An officer, smoking a cigar, gave directions. It was all very well done ; no professional furniture removers could have done better. When the van was full it was driven to the station.

As for us, we continued our journey on foot. We were in the charge of the police, who sent us with a convoy, where we found ourselves mixed up with prisoners of all arms, civilians, and Moroccan soldiers who were obviously dazed and dumbfounded at what had befallen them. We marched all that day, guarded by the mounted police. The police turned us over to old men of the Bavarian Landsturm, who wore a leather cap with a white cross over the

peak, and who were stiff in their manner to us, but not unkindly. They were not fighting men, and there was nothing of the conquering hero about them. Night fell, the third night



since our friend the Chasseur waved his blood-stained handkerchief at the end of his bayonet. Our poor little party was packed into a small coachhouse. The captain, a fat and portly little person, before shutting us in said: "Any one who tries to get out will be shot. Those are my orders." A Bavarian gave us a little soup, and we stretched ourselves on the

floor to wait for the morrow.

In our march next day we met on our way ammunition waggons, enormous lorries, ambulances, guns, and cavalry escorts. The carriages were grey, the guns grey, the uniforms grey, the only note of colour the dolls dressed in the

uniforms of French soldiers, looted from some shop, on the front of the officers' motors. We met a company of infantry. One tall fellow left the ranks, and with an oath struck one of our wounded, who had his arm in a sling, with the butt-end of his rifle. The poor fellow stumbled, and an officer, without a word, pushed the brute away. We heard shouts from an officer's motor as it passed; they cursed us, and as it vanished in the dust one of them shouted: "You dirty Boches!" Well he knew that there was no worse insult.

* * * * *

We came to a town. Our escort conversed and looked up: they had just seen an aeroplane. It was a French machine, and coming rapidly towards us. The German soldiers were much excited, and we heard the click of their rifles as they pulled the triggers. Then we heard a whistle, and a deafening volley rang in our ears. Then we had another painful experience. Bombs had been dropped from the aeroplane, and we were at once lined up against

the wall of a house. The aeroplane had disappeared. The officers argued for a moment ; then the captain got on his horse again, and gave the order to march. We entered the town—Cambrai.

The streets looked dead ; there were notices on all the walls, in French, from the *Kommandantur*. People saw us go by without a word. One woman, who stepped forward to give us some bread, was roughly pushed away by a soldier. Then we halted in a square, near the town hall. The bombs from the aeroplane had fallen there, a shop had been gutted, and dead horses were lying in a pool of blood. We were tired out, and stretched ourselves on the ground. The townsfolk, who were allowed to come near us, brought us provisions, chiefly bread and fruit. Our escort seized them and ate their fill, then beat off the crowd with the butt-ends of their rifles, and off we marched again. I saw some women crying.

We had not much farther to go. We were

taken to the goods station, where the Bavarians handed us over to some big Saxon soldiers—quite young fellows—who handled our poor flock somewhat brutally. There were all sorts and conditions in this flock which we found there, filling the station, soldiers and civilians and some old men among the civilians. A little lad of thirteen, weeping bitterly, was dragged along by a big fellow in a helmet. The child was found playing in the street with a case of cartridges, and the Boche explained: “*Franc-tireur! franc-tireur! Kapout,*”* making a sign to the thirteen-year-old prisoner that he would have his throat cut. That is their mania; they see *francs-tireurs* everywhere.



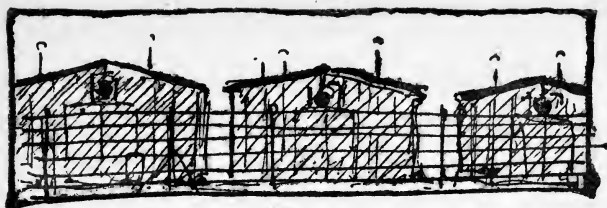
* *Kapout*, slang in German for “Done for,” “dead.”

Night fell. We were famished, for we had only been given a handful of biscuits since the morning, and we were put into cattle trucks. There were forty-six of us in my truck, among them the poor little lad who was a *franc-tireur* and ten wounded men. The train moved off into the night towards Germany. Where were we going to ?

The little boy cried all the time.

THE CAMP





AFTER running a long time through that interminable night we stopped. There was no roll-call. There was something terrifying in all this quiet and silence and darkness ; it was like a nightmare after a battle. When daylight dawned a ray of sunlight filtered through a crack of the door. We became more and more hungry, and a gunner called for his coffee. The train ran for a long time before the next stop. Then the sliding-doors creaked, and we could see, and the gunner again asked for his coffee. But nothing happened ; only a German soldier thrust his head in, grinned, signed to the little lad that his throat would be cut, and the door was shut to again. The train started. There was a great clash of the carriages, and the whole train vibrated. We

were at Brussels. The skylight of the truck was opened to give us some air, and we were thrown some bits of bread. We could see people waving adieu to us from their windows. As we passed under a bridge a man in the street took off his hat and waved it.

The train ran on and on, and the long hours went by. We waited a very long time at sidings and saw troop-trains go by full of men singing patriotic songs and abusing us. A second night passed, . . . and another day. We had the horrible feeling that we should never leave this truck, and that we were forgotten. The third night we could not sleep, we were so famished. In the light which filtered through the skylight as into a cellar, I could see the men's faces, terrible in their pallor and dreariness, all drawn and haggard. We no longer spoke, but the little lad never ceased crying. We ran past ruined Liège and the frontier, then Aix-la-Chapelle. We were running through *their* country now, and there were shouts every time our train passed a station. At Cologne

we were greeted by a rain of pebbles on the trucks, and I remembered I came here a few months ago with some fellow-artists and art critics. We came to see and admire their exhibition. We had a magnificent reception *then*, and yet they threw stones and spat on us as we went by.

We suffered increasingly from hunger, and it was only after another interminable night of torture that we were allowed to leave the truck—I don't know where—and have soup at some hall built for the accommodation of troops. When we got into the truck again we had had almost enough to eat, and had taken a new lease of courage. We laughed at a peasant woman in a field with a black bonnet and red petticoat, and became quite cheerful.

Yet another night in the train! I have forgotten how many that makes. Then the train stopped, and the doors of the trucks were thrown open. We had reached Merseburg.

* * * * *

It was raining. We were ordered on to the

platform and drawn up in fours. On the other side of the barriers a crowd with umbrellas was waiting for us. "Are we going to catch it?" whispered my neighbour. But they did not stir and let us pass without a word. Oh, that march in the rain, that soaked the dust and dirt we were coated with! They looked at us with much curiosity. Our uniforms of all colours, the flat caps of the Alpine troops, the turbans, the Tunisian caps of our sharpshooters, had a strange and almost gay appearance in this gloomy town under the pouring rain. . . .

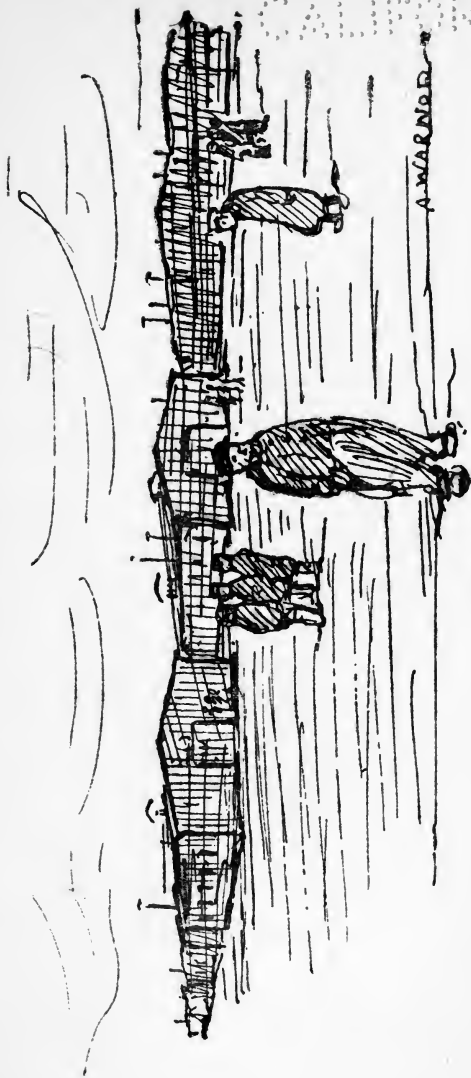
Nine months ago the camp was not built, and when we passed that morning before the guard-house at the entrance in order to reach the shelters which were soon to be replaced by the present huts, all we saw under the downpour of fine rain was an immense plain of mud, enclosed by strands of barbed wire. How many weeks were we going to be there? we thought. Say rather, how many months?

Soon, alas! the desert was peopled. It was

a town the other day when I left it, but what a town ! Wooden huts covered with tarred paper, all exactly alike and all facing the same way, were ranged in lines as far as the eye could see, and nothing to break the grey and dead monotony of these great rusty-black huts, set out with military precision on a plain of dust or mud, not a single blade of grass, not even the smallest shrub, but an infinity of lines of barbed wire, the only vegetation of this desolate place, climbing from stake to stake round the camp like strange and cruel and cunning creepers, forming a fence six feet high. Then they descend to form a second fence at a little distance from the first, insinuate themselves between the huts, are ranged six deep in an enclosure which swallows them up, then continue on their way, and overtake the first fences, then wind up and down and lose themselves in a maze—unwearied creepers strengthening and consolidating the cage on every side. We soon got to feel that we were cut off from *everything* here, and that the rest of the

prisoner's life would be spent on the wrong side of these iron strands. There are the country, and leafing trees, and rising corn still, and people who laugh and suffer, and young men who arm to defend their country, but all this is on the other side of these iron strands. Like captive and domestic animals, prisoners see things from a great distance. No one comes near them but the men who are there, the sentries armed with their rifles, with their guns always pointed, their watchdogs, and their machine-guns all ready and waiting, and a little farther off a crowd—young girls in gay costumes, old men who drink beer, and spectacled boys who grin as they peep at us through opera-glasses.

It takes courage to accustom oneself to live in these little pens, like those of animals in a zoological garden. Each division contains a group of about fifteen hundred men, packed into six huts. There are eight such groups in the camp. It is a model camp, laid out most methodically, a genuine specimen of jerry-



THE HUTS.

A WARNING

THE NEW
AMERICAN

built Boche work. Nothing is missing : there are guardhouses, kitchens, a bathhouse with douches, wash-houses, a little hospital, a disinfecting establishment, gas, and electric light. It is admirable, it is quite complete, only the essential is lacking. Prisoners are dying of hunger, three men sleep on two verminous mattresses, and there are prisoners who have not been warm for a moment all the winter. After some months of wear and tear the woodwork is all warped, and the roofs let in the rain. But it is a model camp, made in Germany, and in theory there is nothing lacking.

The camp is almost a town, a town of twenty thousand souls, with a male population made up of many and various elements : civilians from the north, mostly miners, men not liable for military service or invalids (for a long time we had boys of twelve and old men of eighty), every variety of soldier, Territorials from conquered towns, wounded Zouaves, numberless hungry and ragged Russians, bare-legged

Scots, native African soldiers wrapped in their burnouses ; and, to add to the crowd's cosmopolitan appearance, all the uniforms are inter-



changed. There are Zouaves with Russian boots, Belgians with English cloaks, sharpshooters wearing gunners' jackets ; and a collection of regulation buttons of all the armies may be found on all the tunics.

It was the Germans' scheme to mix all the allied nations together. They imagined that there would be quarrelling and fighting amongst us as a result of our close proximity, and they were wrong. All these men who suffer the same hardships at the hands of the same foe have learnt to know and love one another, perhaps better than comrades in arms. The prisoners are an international

society from which Germany is excluded, and some evenings in the hut there is felt the beat and throb of a single heart, the heart of the immense army of the Allies.

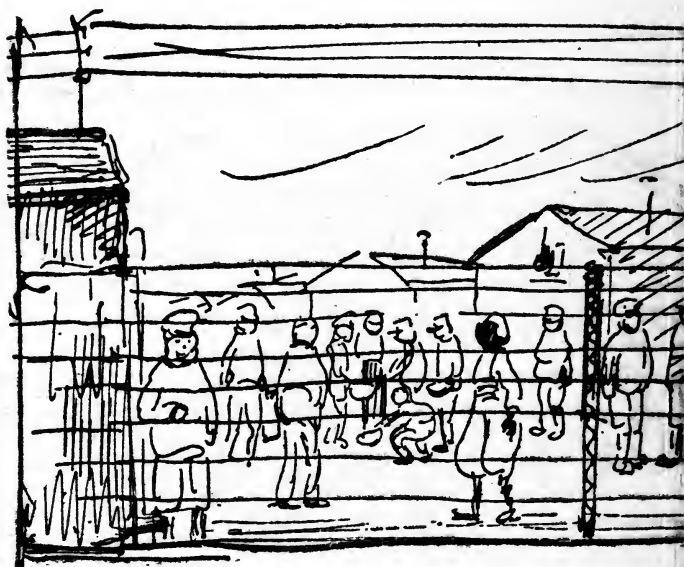
But every man retains his own individuality; the races and countries keep their own characteristics.

And it is this variety of picturesque effect that is the first impression on entering a hut. The Russians are busy carpentering, their grey-green uniforms high lights of pale colour against the mattresses of buff-coloured



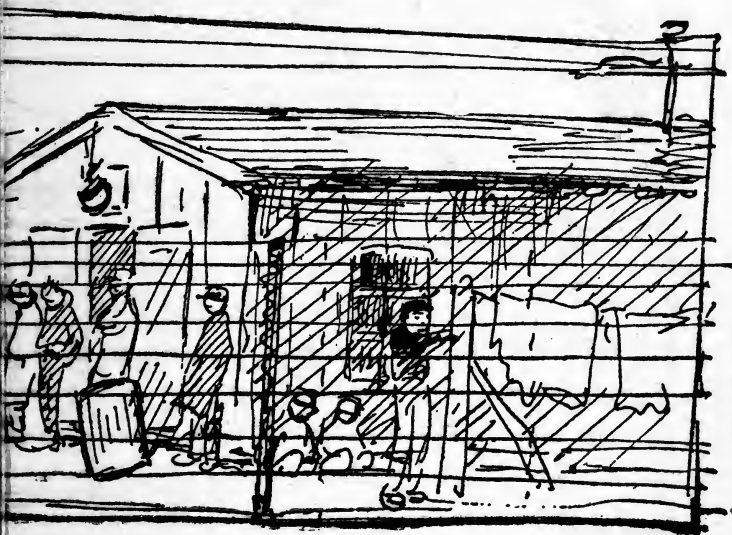
canvas and the deal planks. The French soldiers return to their barrack life, and their quarter has something of the appearance of a regimental mess. Order and neatness are some disguise to the dirt. Clothes are

folded neatly up, like kit, knapsacks and water-bottles hang on their nails. But the poor civilians live in a muddle—the helpless muddle of men who have never been soldiers, and are forced to live together. They have been brought here unexpectedly, some seized in their beds, others as they went out to buy tobacco; and they were made to march with oaths and blows just as they were, some in



slippers, some bare-headed, most of them without any money, rich and poor, bandy-legged and hump-backed, old men and children, herded together pell-mell in pitiful misery, looking like frightened emigrants crowded together in the hold of a ship.

It is a stirring, noisy, restless company, crowded together in too small a space ; clothes are drying on lines stretched from one wall to



the other, and the air is unbreathable. We sing and smoke—although it is quite against the rules—we argue and quarrel; some play cards, and others, half dressed, try to wash themselves. Vermin swarms on the insuf-



ficient supply of mattresses on which we sleep, side by side, for we do not even have our beds to ourselves.

During the winter, as it was very cold, and as we were only allowed an absurdly small quantity of coal (though we had magnificent

stoves), it was only the heat from all our bodies squeezed tightly together that kept us from freezing. The windows were rarely opened, and directly they were open there were violent protests, for some preferred this horrible air, thick with the smell of tobacco smoke, sweat,



and human breath, to the damp and cold outside. When summer came, most of us were sent to work, and the hut was less uninhabitable.

The interpreter and the captain of the hut live in a little room partitioned off from the common room. Some of these rooms, which are furnished, by some miracle of ingenuity,

almost elegantly, have a friendly and familiar air, which is some alleviation of captivity. Some men sent for paper from the town to hang their walls, and had a table and stools made for them by the Russians. Artists hung water-colours on the walls and pinned up charcoal sketches. And, among all this wretchedness, these little rooms were gracious and pleasant retreats, even though they were not entirely free from vermin, and although the snow brought in in winter by all the iron-shod shoes and sabots melted in the warmth within, as it did in the huts, and kept them constantly damp.

The prisoner's life begins before daybreak, and a sad and grey existence it is. The section for the day provides men whose duty it is to go to the kitchens for coffee. It is a dubious and darkish liquid—probably roasted acorns or barley, and without any sugar—but it is hot, and that is all we have a right to expect. The room wakes up, and those careful souls who went almost supperless to bed have a little bit



SOUP.

P.W.

THE
NEW
SPRING
CAMP

TO VINE
ABSTRACTED

of horrible K.K. bread to dip in the inky beverage.

Shortly afterwards German non-commissioned officers turn every one out with kicks and shouts of "*Aus! aus!*" This is for the roll-call. We are drawn up for an hour and sometimes longer. In winter the bitter cold gnawed at our feet and our fingers. The Germans had to call the roll, and that takes time: the numbers are never right. There are always too many or too few of us, and we are counted again, and again, and again. When that is over the section is given bread, and distribute it—an important matter!

In a prisoner's camp, bread is a precious commodity and extremely scarce. It is not sold at the canteen and every month the ration is slightly reduced. At the present moment a small bit has to last all day. It is dark, close, damp and pasty stuff, the product of some elaborate chemical formula, bitter and sour in taste, and with a crust hard enough to break one's teeth. Yet you should see how carefully

and respectfully it is divided. In some of the huts they have made scales, so that every one may have his due allowance to a grain; in others it is left to chance; after it is cut up every man receives a number. It is a lottery, and any one who gets a piece a little bigger than the others is the object of bitter envy.

At half-past ten, soup. It comes in large iron cans carried by four men. Prisoners, bowl in hand, are drawn up, and the distribu-



tion begins. Every one has a right to a ladleful,—nearly a pint of soup. One day it is meat soup, and the next a vegetable soup. On the vegetable days it consists of a flour of vegetables in water, sometimes too salt and sometimes without any salt, or else barley or rice. On meat days bits of chopped meat are added, and such meat!—udders and garbage, liver, heart, and milt. I feel sick when I remember it.



The evening soup was perhaps worse : linseed, millet, flour and tapioca boiled in water without either salt or sugar ; and this when it cooled became a solid paste. Or perhaps we were given potatoes only fit for pigs, hardly washed at all, and cooked in their jackets, with occasionally a piece of cold black pudding (which was often bad) or a raw salted herring. Imagine the horror of a poor famished prisoner as he bites this raw fish, while the salt takes the skin off his mouth !

* * * * *

We did no work in the winter, and the empty days dragged on monotonously. After the evening soup, when our tasks were done, we became even more sad and cheerless. We talked of the war, and told stories of battles ; the wounded repeated the same tales of the atrocities they had seen and spoke of their sufferings ; the Belgian civilians spoke of the horrors of the invasion of their country, of the bodies of violated women that were found in the fields, of mutilated men and children, of

whole villages made to march in front of the German lines, of looting and drunken revels, of the German soldiers with the spiked helmets. Then silence and the night, softly wrapping all things in its mystery. We think of home, and of our loved ones, of the days when we marched, bayonet in hand, along the roads of France, facing machine-gun fire. How we longed for those days, and with what passionate joy we wished to advance again, if it were but possible ! But we are nothing—mere captive animals. We have the horrible feeling of being deserted, lost, and linked to life only by the slender thread of the post. That is all that matters here, the letters and the parcels which keep us from starvation.

When the spring came we worked. Those who go out to work daily come back in files, exhausted, in the evening ; but most of the workers sleep where they work, in factories and sheds. We only saw them when they were brought back with limbs or ribs broken in an accident at the mine, borne on a stretcher to

the hospital. And sometimes at nightfall another convoy used to leave the camp. Guards with black cloaks and fixed bayonets served as its escort, and our red-trousered soldiers drew a cart on which was bound the coffin of some poor lad who had died in camp of fever or tuberculosis. His hour had not struck amid the roar of the guns and the hiss of bullets; it came for him in this heavy, hostile, and venomous country of our foes. . . .

We go to bed, rolled up in our blankets, and try to get to sleep as quickly as we can before another day begins in the huts and worksheds, —a day as empty, as sad, and as monotonous as the rest of them.



A WARNING

THE RUSSIANS ARE HUNGRY.

NO. 1000
1000000000

THE GERMANS AND US

v





Non licet omnibus. . . . It is not every little German town that is lucky enough to have a prisoners' camp. Happy the town that has one, for the camp is a great attraction! For families that perhaps have never had a day's amusement it is as entertaining in its way as a negro village or a Touareg hut.

So people came in crowds to inspect us, and see various specimens of the race hostile to Germany safe behind barbed wire. It diverted them, and at the same time it was a tribute to the military power of the great kingdom of the Boches, and an amusement that never palled. They brought opera-glasses to see us more distinctly. The native Moroccan troops and

the kilted Scots caused great hilarity, and the sight of the wounded was a stimulus to their patriotic feelings. Old men shook their fists, called us names, and waved their sticks and umbrellas when they caught sight of crutches



and empty sleeves. On Sundays people from the neighbouring villages flocked to see us as well as the townsfolk. The women in their Sunday best (a wonderful sight ! it was our turn to laugh then) passed by our wire fence, and their ridiculous little boy-scouts,

short and spectacled, came by, waving flags and preceded by fifes and drums. Every one was surprised and amused at the show, and there were serious and well-informed men among the crowd who, without any apparent hostility, "described and explained" the prisoners. But they had no idea that they,

too, were a spectacle ; and they were very much surprised when prisoners, starving and ragged, strolled about singing as if to brave that crowd of idle sightseers. It was months—months of weariness and misery—before



this spirit of courageous gaiety was a little dashed and diminished, for it was a gaiety that told the world that we were Frenchmen and did not admit defeat.

We noticed from the very first day that the German public had a sort of admiration for us—an amused and slightly contemptuous

admiration, it is true. They feel there is something lacking in us, and that something is German *Kultur*. They do not dislike the French, who are, they think, an agreeable, frivolous, and superficial people, who have been duped by the English. . . .

I have often heard this said by both civilians and soldiers in Germany. Some of them even add that before the end of the war France and Germany will unite to attack England. They tell you this grotesque nonsense simply, and with a candid and childlike good faith.

The English, on the other hand, are hated with a bitter hate, which is only equalled by their contempt for the Russians.

Our guards hold very much the same opinions. They are old men of the Landsturm, who are most anxious for the war to end. They cannot imagine a conquered Germany, but they tell some of us that they no longer expect a decisive victory.

These Boche Territorials are absurdly simple-minded. Discipline to them is such a sacred

thing that it never occurs to them that any one would dare to break a rule. One day one of our men, for a bet, walked boldly to the gate of the camp, opened it under the very eyes of the sentry, who never stirred, coolly shut it, and joined a working party which was passing in



the road, and returned to camp without the soldiers realising the nature of the harmless and daring trick of which they were the victims. German soldiers are not bad fellows, but their non-commissioned officers are sometimes sad brutes. Cuffs, kicks, blows with a sword, are of common occurrence, but you can see that they have got into the habit, and some

are quite unintentionally brutal. Others are more deliberate in their methods ; one man, for instance, invented an amusement which made him laugh till the tears ran down his face. He used to go to the kitchen and fill a can with soup, which he set before the door of a hut, and invited the inmates to come and eat. Naturally there was a wild rush for their bowls, and every time a head or a hand was stretched out the Boche rapped it with a heavy iron ladle and rocked with laughter.

Whatever his rank or his education, the Boche is first and foremost a Boche ; that is, a liar and a hypocrite. To be a liar is no disgrace in Germany any more than to be tactless. They do not know what the word means. The German surgeon-major of the hospital where I was orderly, wishing to be agreeable, brought us some meat. It was kind of him, but, what was less kind, he had wrapped the food in a newspaper which displayed on the margin the news of a French defeat and the number of prisoners taken.

As he watched to see what effect his strange present would have on us his smile was a thing worth seeing. A book had been printed in Germany called *Perfide Albion*, a collection of all the French caricatures at the time of the

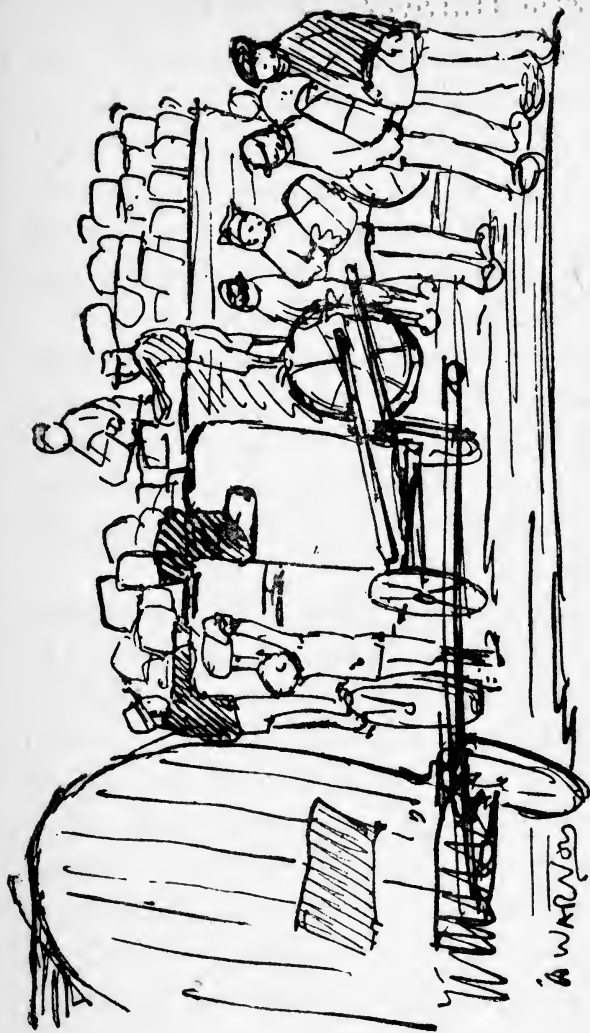


Fashoda incident. The very first thing one officer I knew did—an officer who was on good terms with our surgeon-majors—was to take this book directly it was published to the English major at the hospital. The latter only shrugged his shoulders, and returned it unopened to his German colleague.

The commandant of the camp wanted one day to reward two prisoners of whom he had good reports. He sent for them to his office, and gave each a small parcel. Inside were cigarettes, chocolates, and tins of sardines (all of French brands) which had been stolen from the parcels sent to the prisoners.

For a considerable time parcels sent from France went astray ; but since the spring this no longer happens, at any rate in the camp I came from, and I believe the order that parcels should not be touched is now enforced everywhere.

The prisoner is given his parcels intact after they have been opened and searched in his presence ; the only things that are removed are things that have gone bad, such as mouldy bread. It is possible that lately jars of jam have been opened, on suspicion that they contained letters or newspapers, but this was not the general rule ; and there is absolutely no reason to fear that the Germans steal part of the provisions sent to a husband or son who is a prisoner.



THE PARCEL-POST.

W. W. W. W.

... ..

Parcels are brought to the camp by three big carts, and their distribution lasts all day. Dear parcels, what a number of poor fellows you have saved ! Most of the prisoners live on what is sent them. Solid food should be sent, and biscuits, which take the place of the horrible K.K. bread. If jam is not a food recommended by hygienic authorities it is at any rate better than the stuff served out to prisoners in Germany. Those are delightful and most moving moments when the poor exile receives the parcels which have come from such a distance, and which bring him a little bit of France. More than one of us has felt a lump in his throat, just like a little boy on the verge of tears. But our comrades are looking on with interest, so we dare not show our weakness, and our emotion turns to gaiety. We examine the parcels minutely, and argue about what we are unwrapping, and there are always anecdotes to tell as we are doing so. It is as if these wrappings, the little boxes and mysterious packets bring with them airs of our

own country, and breathing that air, our tongues are loosened.

Then there are letters ; letters are the most important of all. They are given out daily. They are weeks and sometimes months on the way, but how anxious we are to read them. We first hurry through them ; we want to hear what has happened to everybody, to our friends who have left for the front and those who are left behind, and to hear of the love and troubles of those we have left at home. There is not much of this to be learnt from the little card that has been so long on the way. Then we read it again more carefully, and then again. We can guess all it does not say ; we read this card with our heart, and find in it all that passed unseen and unnoticed by the eyes of strangers, the eyes of our enemies who read those dear lines : and we can find shelter in the love and the agonised tenderness of a wife, or the girl we are engaged to, or a mother. That does us good—and hurts us, too, a little.

Then there are money orders. They come

fairly regularly, and they are given out in accordance with each camp's regulations. They are sometimes paid in full, or in instalments of ten marks every ten days, but they are always paid in the end. Money is not so good as parcels, but can be very useful. In nearly all the camps there is a canteen where tobacco is sold ; and ham, sausages, and red herrings are often sold, but naturally no bread. It is also possible to buy things in the town with money, though that is against the rules. We run the risk of being punished, for captivity is not all we are liable to : there is also a possibility of punishments.

First the post, then prison, and lastly court-martial and confinement in a fortress.

The post is a sort of pillory. Men are bound to it, with their feet and hands tied by cords, for one, two, or three hours. It is the mildest of the punishments. Prison is more serious : a man is shut up in a cell, with a bare board for a bed and no blanket, and with a piece of bread as his only food. Every fourth day soup and

a mattress are allowed. These are punishments for mild offences. In more serious cases a prisoner is confined in total darkness. It is a very depressing treatment, and men are imprisoned in this manner for a week, ten, fifteen, or twenty days, and sometimes for months, when the case has come before a court-martial. Smoking in the huts is punished by a week in prison ; and one of us was imprisoned for three weeks for having written in a note to a comrade that Germany was *kapout*. An escape without damage to property or violence is punished with a week or a fortnight in prison for the first offence. In the case of a second attempt the punishment is much more severe.

When a man has served his time in prison he is often ripe for the hospital. The camp hospital is installed in one of the farthest corners of the immense wire cage, and consists of three wooden huts, of a somewhat different design from the others. It, too, is a model hospital of the Universal Exhibition type, but

unfortunately it is also *made in Germany*. Each of the huts has a bathroom and a plentiful supply of windows and ventilating traps; but there are cracks between the boards, the patients have beds, but they had no bed-clothes before May 15th, and their food is the same as that of the other prisoners. Some nights this winter were so cold that medicines froze in the bottles. It is much better not to be in hospital.

The medical service is in the hands of French doctors and orderlies, under a German doctor.

Unfortunately they are indifferently supplied with necessities, and some medicines are unobtainable. The Germans refuse to sanction nearly all the improvements which the French doctors demand; and they are sus-



picious of them. They suspect everybody and everything. The head doctor (a surgeon-major), who just ventured to ask help from France for the wretched prisoners when they were starving and ill clad, was punished with imprisonment. But, fortunately, his action bore fruit, and it is thanks to him that quantities of supplies have been sent.

Our camp had no epidemic, so the mortality was not very high. There were a hundred deaths in nine months among a population of fifteen thousand prisoners. But I do not think this is an average for other camps.

A corner of the town cemetery is kept for the prisoners. The graves are ranged in neat rows, and enough money has been collected in the camp to pay for a monument. It is nearly finished now. The strong lines of the column of stone rise above a simple plinth of smooth stone, a melancholy tribute from those who still may hope to those who will never return.

FIGHTING DEPRESSION





I WONDER if any one who has not experienced them can realise the feelings of a soldier transported by the fortune of war some fifteen hundred kilometres from his native land, and held captive for months within four walls of barbed wire, with the same ugly and tedious view always before him. There are moments when he seriously wonders whether he will ever leave it. So many days and weeks go by without the smallest change that all life seems frozen and checked, and in the end one is stupefied into indifference and disgust at everything. That is the torpor, the depression, with which the prisoner must struggle with all his might, for it is as obstinate an enemy as the foe that

faces our men on the battlefield, a foe that is secret, patient, unrelenting, and intangible. It takes a good deal of courage to get the better of it, and not only courage, but a determination to recover and react against this dangerous



torpor, and to do *something*, it does not matter what.

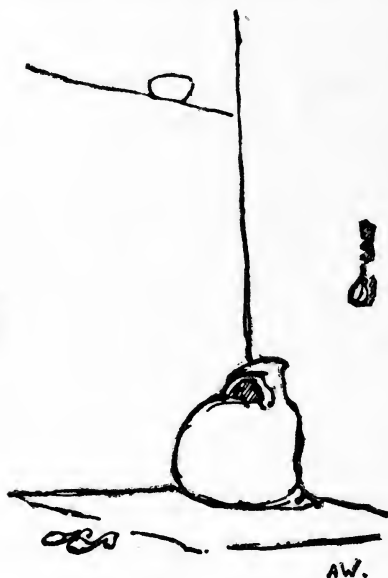
It is probably this instinct which causes the unfortunate exile to revert to his ordinary way of life as far as possible in these new conditions. That is why a prisoners' camp is so picturesque. The native Arab troops, with their red and white haïks and ample burnouses, bearing themselves proudly like barons of the Middle Ages, are an unexpected and exotic element. Before

all the Mohammedans were collected in one camp they were like tropical birds, scattered over Germany. They are magnificent and extraordinary men, and their ideas of warfare are not of to-day; they cannot understand how it is they are there, taken captive like wild beasts caught in a trap. They needed all their fatalism and their absolute conviction that this episode was written in the book of destiny to accept their fate.

Living apart from their fellows, they remain silent and impenetrable, squatting on the ground or rolled up in their burnouses. For days they remain impassive, and are only roused from their dreams at the hour of prayer, when they pray as in their own country, with deep bowings and prostrations, looking towards Mecca. But when they are



together they become living and sociable beings again. The Germans at first thought they would win them to their side. A Boche



who spoke Arabic told them that a Holy War had been proclaimed, that the Germans never interfered in religious matters, and that, if they liked, they might take their horses and arms again and fight under the Prophet's

banner in Turkey. It was a clever move, but the Arabs refused, saying that they were first and foremost French subjects and wished to remain so. The Germans, however, did not give up hopes of them, and treated them with a certain amount of indulgence, allowing them the privilege of living together in the same hut.

This hut presents a strange appearance. One would think one was in the depths of Algeria. Arabs, squatting or sitting on rugs, are smoking or talking in their sedate and dignified manner. On the walls objects of all sorts and garments of every hue hang in a strange medley of colour. As in a Moorish café, they spend their days in dreaming, in chanting prayers, and in telling one another interminable and marvellous stories.

Some of them can speak French, and there are even one or two who have been educated in French schools, and who write verses. Many are very rich, and own immense flocks of sheep, fine horses, and wide domains that

stretch away as far as the eye can see. Imagine how they hate the life here, in a cage, with the horrible soup in which there is always

some pork, which is unclean meat forbidden by the Prophet, for their only food ! The zealots among them observe this rule literally, and only eat on fish-days. On other days they have their morning coffee and a little bread ; but most of them only refuse sausages and black puddings.



They keep the great festivals of their faith. Last November their feast of sheep was celebrated with some magnificence. They spent all the night in prayer and in reciting the Koran, and in the morning, according to the law, they gave away a portion of their goods to



RUSSIANS SINGING.

UNION OF
CANNADIAN

NO. 1000
APPROVED

the poor—that is to say, the Russians, whom they stuffed with bread, jam, and sausages bought at the canteen. It was raining, and the festival, which they usually held in the sunlight under the wide blue African skies, was a lamentable affair. One of them told me he was so downhearted that day that he went out of the hut to weep and wished to kill himself. What a poignant feeling of exile it gave one, amid the fog and cold and wind, to see this Arab, with the head of a Moorish chieftain, wading through the mud, splashing his white trousers, his red boots, and even his spotless haïk, and tucking up his cloak to wash his hands in his bowl before offering up his prayers to Allah beneath the heavy sky of Germany !

The Russians are a very different group. Poor dear fellows, they are the unhappiest of us all. The Germans affect to despise them, have no scruples about harassing and ill-treating them. They have no money, and get no supplies from their far-off homes ; so they

are hungrier than the rest of us, and their appetite is something ferocious.

But a stranger's first impression on seeing so much wretchedness and privation is corrected when he comes to know them better. Then he sees that these poor fellows have very kindly and childlike eyes, and good-natured smiles that light up their faces ; that they are affectionate and willing, and often extremely bright and intelligent. Is it their fault that they are unhappy and hungry ? They get practically nothing from their homes, and yet how tenderly they think of them, how they love to recall them and to lose themselves in their memories. They often get together to sing (some of them have magnificent voices), and sing part-songs with a great deal of feeling. They are sweet and melancholy, with something wild and fierce in them ; and all are steeped in a poignant sadness ; but occasionally they sing a gay and joyous song, in which one man sings a verse, and the refrain is sung in chorus. The subject must be some

THE
CARTOON



RUSSIAN DANCE.

WARNER —

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comic episode, for the rhythm grows faster as the song proceeds, and there are bursts of laughter and broad smiles. There are whistles which punctuate and keep the rhythm of the song, which hurries on faster and faster ;



hands are clapped, and feet beat time, until one of the singers leaves the group, as if he could stand it no longer, and begins to dance, with arms akimbo. The dance becomes an animated pantomime, full of absurdly comic contortions ; and the music hurries faster and ever faster, until the dancers, who crouch and kick their

heels forward with frenzied speed, break into a mad Cossack dance.

But it is at the close of the day that these poor Russians are most characteristically Russian in spirit, as if they wished to "be themselves again" for a little before they sleep and revisit in their dreams their homes, their wives and children. It is at their evening prayer, where one recites the prayer and the rest sing the responses. They put all their soul into this music, which is sung softly. Sometimes, when the doors are shut, and in even softer tones, there rise the broad, calm, and powerful strains of a song which is forbidden.

The Russians are very skilful in manufacturing all sorts of things out of odds and ends, such as bits of board or old tins. They cut out and carve with real artistic feeling with the primitive knives they have fashioned out of fragments of barrel hoops. They make crosses of a mosaic of small bits of wood ; they cut a thin board into fine shavings in imitation of

the delicate plumage of a peacock with outspread wings ; they carve a Cossack and his horse, and little jointed figures, cigarette boxes, and aeroplanes. They have improved on the knife and made it flexible, and have fixed a fork to the handle. They are the most ingenious of our handicraftsmen.

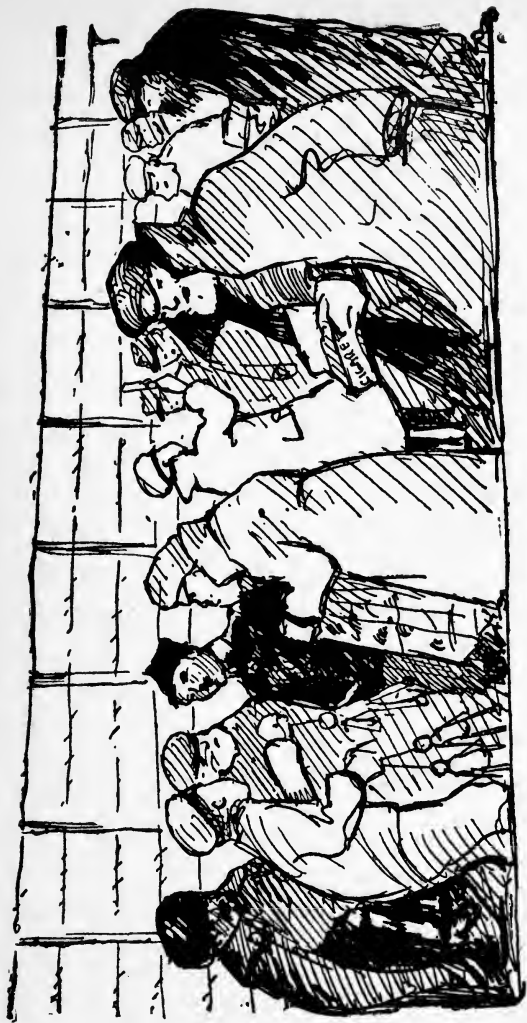
But the French also work : they make nets, and rings out of *chasseur à pied* buttons, and the tailors make caps and socks out of pieces cut from coat-tails, and wallets and ties out of parcel-wrappings.

In a prisoners' camp the small dealers are the most curious types. All sorts of things are bought and sold ; and the crowd is the most picturesque imaginable. Men with a box of



cigars in their hands, and a pile of match-boxes, are crying: "Two cigars for three German pence!" Others offer hand-cut cigarette papers to smokers. This is a curious industry, but supplies a want. In Germany cigarette paper is very heavily taxed, so it is economical to use thin paper cut into small squares instead.

There are a great many Russians at this market, selling their wares. A Zouave waves a white linen wallet, shouting: "Here! going for thirty pfennigs; take it, it is the last of my stock"; but when it is sold, he whips another out of his cape. Men haggle, argue, chaffer, make a pretence of going away and return, and the vendor lowers his price a sou, or sometimes two. There are endless discussions. A German soldier or a working party push their way through the crowd, but it soon closes up again. Besides these vendors, you are set upon by our Russian friends, who offer you ikons given by their pope, holy medals, and regimental buttons, like so many friendly and amicable street hawkers; and then there are



RUSSIAN HAWKERS.



hawkers who cater for the *gourmands*, drawn up in a line by a hut. These vendors offer for sale a newly opened tin of pickled herrings, a packet of sugar, and a pot of jam. Others try to take one in, offering "for twenty pfennigs a dinner with courses, food and drink, a slice of brawn, and a bottle of lemonade." Kadour, a huge Algerian sharpshooter, is holding out a can of hot cocoa, which he sells at ten pfennigs a glass, and others hawk tins of *roll mops*, sugar, and sausages they have bought at the canteen, and sell with a small profit. Sometimes this profit was too high, and that was because at first it was very difficult to get to the canteen. Later, when regulations were made about the food, and the prices were put up in each hut, the business of



these middlemen came to an end. Many of them must have made a fortune, or, to be correct, some ten marks.

One of these dealers had the ingenious idea of setting up a lottery with a wheel he had made himself. For five pfennigs it was possible to



win a bottle of lemonade worth ten pfennigs, and tickets were eagerly sought after. Another had an even better inspiration; he opened a café. Its sign was: "The Veterans of the Allies."

All winter he sold tea, cocoa, and coffee over a counter covered with a sheet of zinc, and when the summer came he put up a tent and sold lemonade. His business prospers, and he has provided a game of "Aunt Sally" for his customers. His is a pleasant stall, the drinks are cool and freshly-made, and we sit in the shade. One soldier who is a second-hand

dealer in civil life continues his trade in the camp. He buys from Peter to sell to Paul. He is also allowed the monopoly of selling lemonade during concerts.

For there are concerts in nearly all the



prisoners' camps in Germany. Ours, if I may say so, is badly off in this respect. Not that there is any lack of goodwill and initiative on our part, but we are divided into groups which keep the prisoners apart, and interfere with any organisation. Our concerts, therefore, were local efforts. Luckily for us, a company

from another camp came to ours. They had painted their scenery and had costumes. They sang Polin's and Mayol's songs in a frock coat (for a coat had been discovered somewhere) and played comedies. There were



professionals and some very clever amateurs among them. The play was staged as in a real theatre, the curtain was made of bed-clothes, the stage of tables, and the box-office gave us passes during the *entr'acte*. But the audience consisted only of this company's members !

Dances are sometimes given, and these are extraordinary in their general effect. The orchestra's instruments are made in camp out of tins, cigarette boxes, and margarine boxes. Out of these tambourines, violins and violoncellos are made, and, after playing



restaurant airs for the soldiers to dance to, they change their repertory on Sunday morning, and perform sacred music in the chapel. Mass is sung in the chapel, which is an empty hut, as bare as the rest. The altar, covered with red material, is often decked with a bunch of flowers, and the priest of the nearest town

lends a stole and surplice to the priests among the prisoners who officiate. I shall never forget the Christmas mass, which was cele-



brated in the darkness before the dawn one cold morning, and the horrible despair which hung over the camp all day. Many go to mass, and it is a lively moment when they leave the

chapel. There are chance meetings and gossip ; the inevitable hawkers are there with their wares, and there is a chance of forgetting we are so far away from everything.

But in spite of all efforts to keep our courage up, and in spite of the strange and picturesque aspects of the camp and the brave jests and laughter in the midst of all this misery, a prisoners' camp is a dreadful place. I tell all my comrades who are fighting, anything is better than prison life, even a severe wound. One has the feeling of being degenerate there ; one is angry and contemptuous of oneself ; one is ashamed of one's idleness, while others are at work so far away ; and, besides, there is always fatigue, exhaustion, tuberculosis on the lookout for you, and albuminuria, which attacks so many who are half-starved.

It is a great misfortune to be a prisoner.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS



ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Have prisoners any plates and dishes, and where do they have their meals?

EACH prisoner on arriving at the camp receives a spoon and a tin, or more usually an enamel, bowl. It is a sort of small salad bowl, holding nearly two pints.

When the soup, which is brought in great iron cans, is given out, the prisoners sit upon their mattresses to eat. They supplement the wretched food I have described with what they have bought at the canteen, with what hawkers who go from hut to hut sell them, and with provisions sent them from home. They have

cause to bless the parcels, and those who send them.





THE ENTRANCE TO THE CANTEEN.

TO THE
LIBRARY OF THE
CONGRESS

THE CANTEEN

Can those who have no provisions sent them, but have a little money, buy what is necessary at the canteen ?

MORE or less. A certain amount of eatable food is for sale at the canteen, though there is not much choice, for the commandant of the camp keeps it under close supervision.

Some things are on sale, while other things are forbidden. At Merseburg prisoners can buy ham at fifty pfennigs for one-fifth of a pound, or two marks fifty a pound ; sausage is a little cheaper ; gruyère, Dutch cheese, sugar (twenty pfennigs for a small quantity), margarine (sixty-five pfennigs the half-pound), red herrings (ten or fifteen pfennigs apiece), and occasionally—but this cannot be officially authorised—eggs at fifteen or twenty pfennigs, cherries (twenty pfennigs a half-pound), and

salad (ten pfennigs). In the matter of drinks there is a choice between lemonade (ten pfennigs a bottle holding three-quarters of a pint) and caramel beer at fifteen pfennigs, the latter a dark and non-alcoholic liquid something like flat stout. For smokes, there are cigarettes (ten for ten pfennigs), cigars at five or ten pfennigs, and German, Swiss, and even French army tobacco. It is a mystery how this tobacco, which is sold at forty pfennigs for three and a half ounces, could have come there.

There are also on sale at the canteen—and this shows the commercial genius of the Boches—many things which are not necessities, but which are there to attract the buyer, for instance, brushes, string for making nets, canvas slippers, travelling bags, mirrors, and even coloured chalks, notebooks, automatic razors and many other things.

In the little square hut which smells delightfully of groceries, just like a real shop, the Red Cross men and medical officers are alone allowed. The other prisoners must



THE CANTEN.

Almond 140

stand at the door, or line up in front of the tiny window where goods are handed out to them.

The man who keeps the canteen does a good trade, for there is no difficulty about making up one's mind between different stores at the camp, and all money orders necessarily find their way to the one canteen. There is nothing else to spend them on.

LETTERS

How are letters from camp sent, and how do letters from home arrive?

ALAS! we often wished we knew.

Many people in France have passed the winter, the spring and the summer hoping for news of their son or their husband, who is a prisoner in Germany. Now and then a post-card arrives, which calms their anxiety for some days, and then begins another period of anxious waiting for the postman, who too rarely brings them the few lines stamped with the blue stamp of the censor's office.

Our people's anxiety can be readily understood, but the wretched soldier behind the wire fences is not to blame. How many poor fellows I have seen weeping when they get such letters full of reproaches. It is one of the

prisoner's greatest trials that he is never sure if his cards arrive or when they arrive. In the camp where I was, it was long before the postal service was organised or was in working order.

At first there were no rules. The prisoners took advantage of this, and there were delays. Suddenly we were allowed to write one postcard a month: that was in December; in February, two postcards were allowed, and at present we are allowed *in theory* to write four postcards and two letters a month. We are allowed to write them, but whether they arrive or not is another story.

Every Saturday postcards are sold for one pfennig, with nine lines ruled on them, on which we must write legibly, without mentioning the war and without complaints, for *theoretically* the prisoner needs nothing, clothed and fed as he is by the kindness of great Germany! The cards are given on Monday morning to the *Feldwebel*,* who takes them to

* Colour-sergeant.

the *Kommandantur*, when they are sent to the censor.

This is a lengthy business, lasting days, weeks, and sometimes months. A layer of dust slowly settles on the pile of cards, and the Boche censor takes them one by one, reads them line by line, word by word, wasting a quarter of an hour looking up a word he suspects of a double meaning, or a bit of *patois* he does not understand, in a dictionary. The forbidden words are crossed out, and finally the cards are posted, and set out for France.

Many people ask me if there are camps where writing is forbidden, and if they ought to give up all hope of a prisoner who has not written since last autumn. It is possible, but I have only seen one case in which this extraordinary measure was adopted, and the prisoner forbidden to write to his family. He had already been punished by imprisonment.

There is, however, one category of prisoners of whom no news is heard in France. These are the men who remain in hospital in

Belgium and in other occupied territory. They are sometimes kept there a very long time before they are removed to a German camp, and during that time their family can learn nothing about them. This is the only hope for so many relatives and women who are waiting for news.

The letters that come here have to undergo the same examination as the outgoing letters. Every word is weighed, and that takes a long time, but it does the Germans very little good, for families often use codes and ingenious combinations of words which I will not describe. French is an admirable language !

The censor I knew was a German who had a thorough knowledge of French. He had good reason to know it, for before the mobilisation he was employed in a large shirt-shop near the



Boulevards. One day when I had business with him he said to me : " I am very glad to make your acquaintance, for after the war I can come to you for theatre tickets after shop hours, can't I ? " My astonishment at this proposal seemed to surprise the censor from the shirt-shop enormously.



THE STEALER OF BREAD.

IN CASE OF FIRE

AT Merseburg, apart from some very hard labour outside the camp, I did not see any operations except the fire drill.

A fire in camp would be a terrible affair : all these huts of wood, covered with tarred paper, heated by the sun all day in summer, and with mattresses inside stuffed with shavings, would burn like a match. So strict measures are taken in case of fire.

In each hut there are great vats of water for " first aid " ; and in addition two fire brigades are organised, one of German, the other of French soldiers, who are regularly drilled and see that the waterpipes are in good order. As for the prisoners, a notice in each hut gives directions in case of fire.

A bell near the guardhouse is to ring while

the fire lasts. At this signal all the prisoners are to cry : " Fire ! fire !" and carrying their bed-clothes, rush in good order to the place where the roll is called every morning.

This spectacle has afforded me amusement several times. Directly the Boche non-commissioned officer enters, crying : " Fire !" there is a mad rush. We know that it is only " in fun," and rush out shouting, and our guards are busy hurrying us out ; then we are drawn up, and each returns quietly to the hut. There are days when existence is so dreary that we could wish to hear the bell rung in earnest, in the hope of seeing something new.

MASS

I HAVE mentioned the chapel ; it is an empty hut, just like the others. The walls are bare, and posts at regular intervals support the naked beams of the roof. The altar stands at the far end of the hut. It is very plain, consisting of a table and a shelf covered with red material. There is a crucifix in a niche, and on each side, pinned to the stuff, chromolithographs representing Christ and the Virgin Mary. The missals and breviaries and two candles are the only other features. A bench set across the room serves as a screen.

But in the dim light of this great hut this simplicity has a moving power, and amidst the ugliness and miseries of the camp this red altar, illumined by the little wavering flames of the long wax candles, looks sumptuous and magnificent. It is the gate of paradise.

On Sunday morning services are held uninterruptedly from seven o'clock till eleven. At ten or half-past ten high mass is celebrated. These services are moving and picturesque from their very bareness and simplicity. A priest—one of the prisoners—wearing a surplice and stole lent by the priest from the nearest town, says mass, assisted by a soldier as acolyte. Another priest, clothed in white, gives a short address, in which he speaks of patience and resignation and encourages the down-hearted. There are always a good many men at these services. We all crowd in, jostling one another, and stand with our *képis*, our caps, in our hands. There is a medley of uniforms, for there are soldiers who have come straight from the trenches or from other camps in pale blue, the old uniform of the early days of the war with red trousers, Hussars, infantrymen, *chasseurs d'Afrique*, and even some Catholic Russians, who prostrate themselves with bowed head. All sing the hymns with great fervour. In a corner there are violins



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(made with real skill in the camp), and a student of the Conservatoire with a fine voice sings Gounod's *Ave Maria* or a *Pie Jesu* in a masterly manner to this accompaniment.

Some of these masses are unforgettable. I spoke of the Christmas mass. I think it was the most affecting moment of our captivity. At first it was to have been said at midnight, but there were too many difficulties, and it was put off till half-past six in the morning of December 25th. Christmas Eve had been gloomy; some of the prisoners had made attempts at gaiety, and had sent to the town for food, and also for some wine. But it was no good: our thoughts were elsewhere at this melancholy feast and we dared not express them for fear of depressing our neighbours. We made an effort to be cheerful, and about half-past eleven some one suddenly said: "Hush! Listen."

We went outside and found everything covered with snow. The air was dry and cold, and the sound of bells, thin, tremulous and

musical, broke the silence. There was a midnight mass at a church not far away ; there were women and children there, and warm houses to welcome them on their return from church. No further attempts were made to conceal our feelings, and we were so unhappy that we very quickly separated and went to bed.

Next morning they were all at chapel, and others besides who had no money and so had not had a better meal on Christmas Eve. It was cold and raw, and it was still dark in the chapel, where the only light came from the candles ; but there was not enough to show the red of the altar hangings ; everything looked black, both the vaguely visible groups of prisoners and the form of the priest as he performed the ritual gestures.

There was something very tragic in all this wretchedness, and as it was dark, and they were unseen, many men did not trouble to hide their tears. When the moment for prayer came, it was like the noise of surges, like the sound of

a sea of hundreds of voices whispering their supplications for those they had left in their deserted homes, and for those who were fighting. The priest lifted the Host, and, with a loud clattering and scraping of iron-shod shoes and sabots on the floor, all fell on their knees and prayed, hiding their faces with their hands.

Outside day began to dawn, and crept along the grey huts, a dim and disconsolate thing.

“*Noël! Noël! Noël! . . .* A happy Christmas!”



WORK



WHEN spring came what we had feared all winter came too : the Germans made their prisoners work. They had the right to. The news was not received with enthusiasm, but volunteers were numerous at the first levy that was held. The Russians were the first to put their names down. Men hoped at least to be a little better fed, and perhaps eat their fill. But they soon changed their tune, and there was a difficulty in finding fresh labourers ; there were no more volunteers, and men were taken as they came in order on the list. Those who had been wounded or were entered as sick had to pass a doctor's examination.

This examination by the French doctors was followed by a second examination by the

German surgeon-major, and it was very difficult to get exempted from work. The French majors found themselves in a difficulty, as they were torn between the necessity of obeying the German instructions and the wish to please their countrymen. It must be said of them that they always put their wishes before their duty to the Germans, and only sent men to work when they really had no choice.

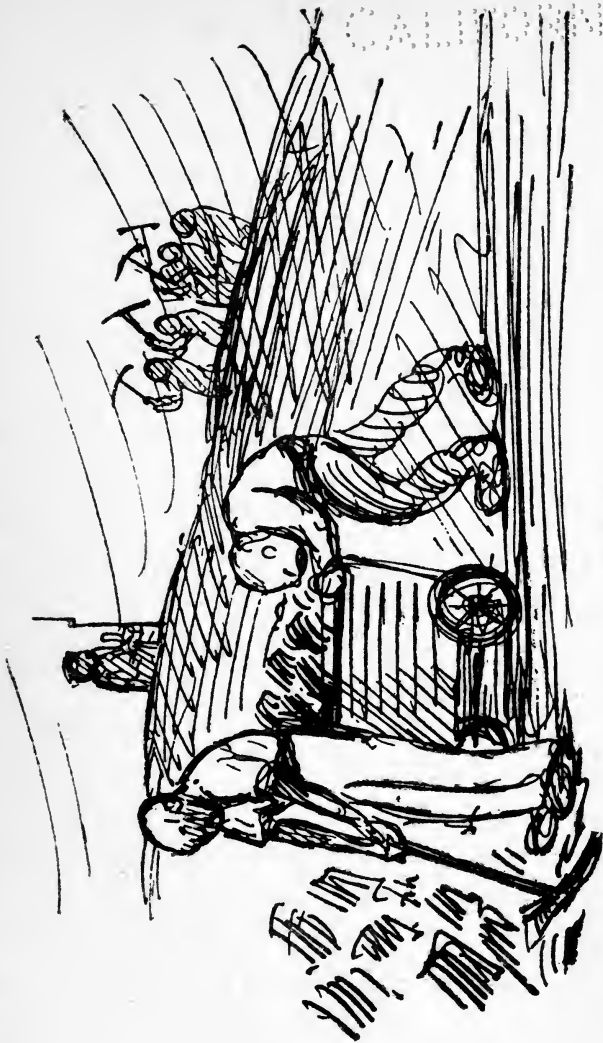
Once the list is complete, no more discussion is allowed, and some day an order comes to start. Then we have to be quick about strapping our bag, and saying good-bye to our friends before we set out for a new and unknown destination.

These departures are important events in the endless monotony of camp life. Those who are leaving spend much time and trouble in packing all their possessions. This is a matter of some difficulty, if they have many parcels. Into bags and wallets they have manufactured out of wrappings from parcels they bundle all their property, and then fasten them as well as they

can to their backs with string. A Boche orders them out and counts them over and over again with the list in his hand. Those who remain behind in the camp are also waiting, shaking hands, and giving their addresses for the days when war will be over. We suddenly realise that lots of people we thought we did not care much for really meant something to us after all ; and we are affected by the thought that we may never meet again. Then they move off ; the working party form up, escorted by armed guards, they leave the camp road, they go by the guardhouse, the great gate opens, and they are in the road. They are waving their caps and *képis* and handkerchiefs, their boots kick up the dust,—real dust of the high-road, and then they turn by the bridge and pass out of sight. . . . We look at one another without a word, because our thoughts are too deep for words. It is not only the distress at losing people we have grown accustomed to : we have seen them go, and seen the door of our cage opened.

As I was employed at the hospital, I never went with a working party, although an orderly often accompanied the gangs, but I have seen those who returned. Most of those who were brought back on a stretcher sent to meet them at the station after some terrible accident were treated in my ward. The poor fellows were in a shocking state. As they were not used to the particular kind of work they were obliged to do, they were sometimes rather clumsy at first, and there were accidents. For instance, a grocer unloading heavy consignments of steel from trucks ends by dropping one on his foot, and a farmer working in a mine disappears in a downfall. When they are in hospital, with their heads bandaged and their broken limb set in a frame or in plaster of Paris, they talk about their life before the accident, and what they say is not encouraging for the next working party.

There are good places and bad places, as is always the case, decent people among the employers of prison labour and cowardly



AT WORK.

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ALBERTA

brutes. Nearly all the workers made the same complaint of insufficient food, for the diet which just keeps an inactive prisoner alive is not much more plentiful for a wretched prisoner who has to put in ten or twelve hours of arduous and exhausting work. This refrain, "We have not enough to eat," comes in all the wretched little notes the workers manage to smuggle to their comrades in camp.

The German workmen eat very little, much less than our men at home, and perhaps in Germany people think the prisoners are very well fed.

The working parties have no more freedom than behind their camp fences. They live in the worksheds, and on Sunday, if they do not work, they are shut up all day in the sheds, where they sleep.

Another frequent complaint is the impossibility of washing after a hard day's or night's work in a coal-mine or a brick-yard. They are for days and sometimes weeks as black as niggers with the grimy coal dust that sticks to the skin.

Those who work in the open air, in the fields, and in the forests are much better off. Some men I knew went to clear some land for an aviation ground, and they had no complaints to make of their absence from the camp.

The guards, the peasants, and the workmen with whom they come into contact are also very important factors. Sometimes the guard have to put a stop to sympathetic demonstrations in favour of French prisoners, and sometimes, but more rarely, they have to interfere in their defence. In some workshops German workmen and prisoners work side by side; naturally there is less friction. The soldier can buy himself more food and drink; and in some parts of the country the women and children—all who are left—bear no grudge against our poor fellows, who are, like them, victims of the war. Attempts are made at conversation; some prisoners even were sent back to Merseburg and to prison, who had been on too friendly terms with the sentimental German women.

The medical service in the sheds and factories where there are sometimes several hundreds of prisoners at work is also very badly managed. Sometimes—and this is the best arrangement—they are attended by a local civilian doctor, assisted by French and German orderlies. There are even some works where there is a regular ambulance, but in most cases there is no provision at all. Then they are examined by a German non-commissioned officer, and his methods can be imagined. Threats of punishment and even physical violence, according to an old soldier acting as a doctor, are as efficacious as rest and medicine.

There are also reprisal camps. Life in these camps must be awful. I give a few lines from a letter written by a non-commissioned officer employed in draining a marsh :—

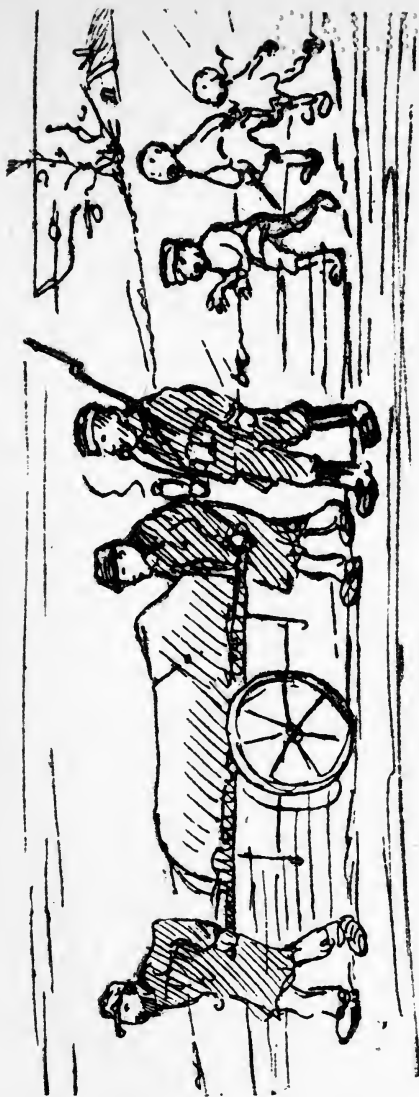
“ We are still here in the reprisal camps, and are not by any means comfortable on our straw in our tents. There is a continual cloud of dust both inside the tent and out. We are as

black as sweeps when we stop work. Our tent lets in water. We have more opportunity here for writing to say we are uncomfortable, and for giving this fact as wide a circulation as possible." These prisoners, and these

alone, are allowed to write of their sufferings—a thoroughly Boche touch!



As all prisoners in Germany have to work, the luckiest are the men employed at the camp. There is a considerable number of employments open. There are cooks, who are nearly all Frenchmen, under a German head cook, and they have to work hard, but as there are always bits over in kitchens, they can pick up something to eat without robbing their comrades. There are also tailors, who are allowed a stove for heating their irons, and can also improve their food. There are also attendants at the baths and washhouses, who



AFTER AN ACCIDENT.

CONCLUSIONS

can get boiling water when they like, and supply the vendors of tea and cocoa. There are men who attend to the gas and electric light and very many clerks. Every company has its French quartermasters, who work under a German *Feldwebel*, and prisoners are employed in all the departments of the commandant's office. Naturally, they are not put in positions of trust. They sort letters which are to be posted or distributed, enter the money orders that are sent, count the parcels brought from the station by working parties guarded by an escort.



For those who can speak some German prison life has its alleviations: they have a certain position, they are better treated, and have something to think about.

THE WATER SUPPLY





WHEN we hear that epidemics of typhus and typhoid broke out in several of the German prison camps, that in some of these camps six to twelve thousand cases occurred, and two to three thousand deaths, we are anxious about the water supply, and wish to know if it is good in quality and quantity.

At Merseburg, where there were no epidemics, the water supply was regular. It was perhaps rather long before it was in working order, but I must say it was very well managed before I left the camp. Every prisoner could have one showerbath a week ; and there was a regular supply of hot and cold water, and each company had its day. There were basins and

jugs for washing in the morning, besides the taps of running water in front of the huts. Before the shower baths were introduced it was difficult to wash thoroughly, and I shall never forget the absurd appearance of one prisoner, who made superhuman efforts to have a bath in a basin much too small for him.

In some camps washing is arranged for by the officials; in others the prisoner must do his washing as best he can. In my camp we had to wash our clothes at the tap all the winter when the water was not frozen, or in a basin when there was one to spare; but at last, towards the end of April, the washhouses with hot and cold water were ready. This was delightful. There was even a disinfecter to wage war successfully against vermin.

The water, of which there is a plentiful supply, is good, and that is all the prisoner gets, unless he prefers to buy lemonade and caramel beer at the canteen, or from the hawkers who come round to the huts, and charge a little extra for their trouble. There are also vendors

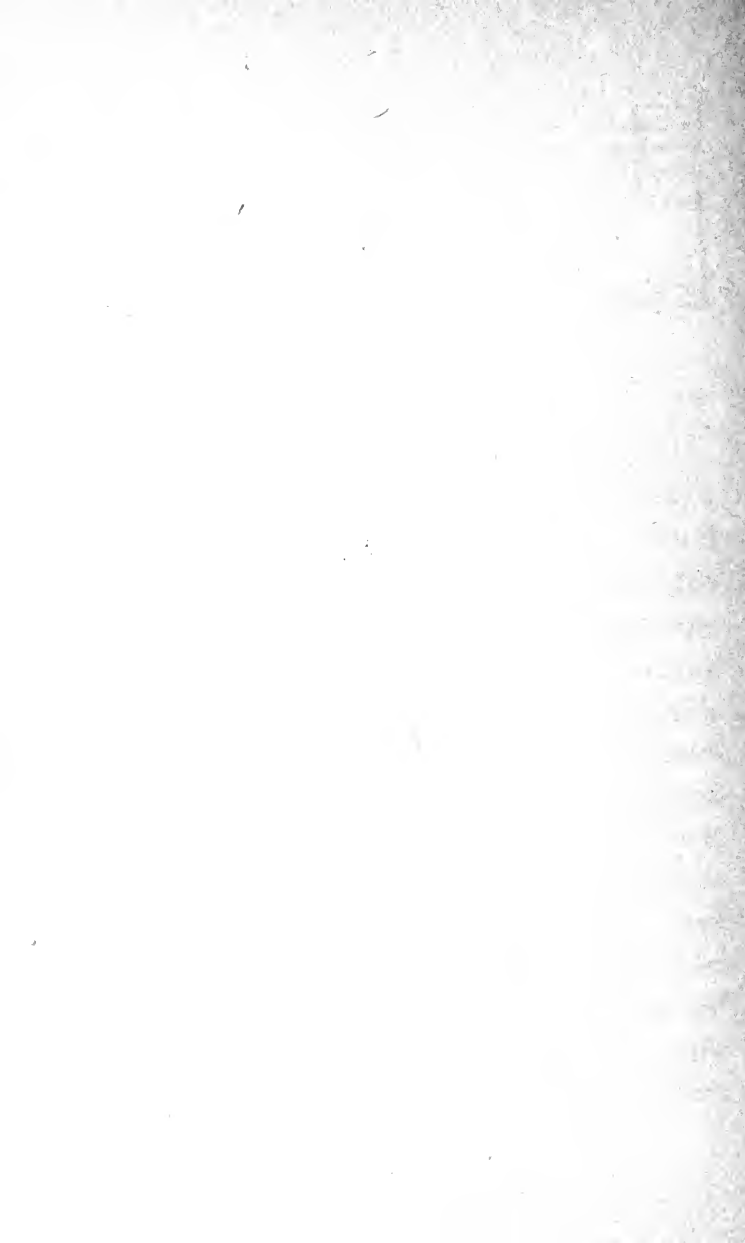
of coffee who go round after every meal, and vendors of tea in the afternoon. But that is all the prisoner gets to drink, and he often bitterly regrets his sojourn in a country famous for its beer, which he has no opportunity of tasting.



THE DISINFECTOR



NEWS





It is quite impossible to live for months at a time without news, so when there is none we invent it, or rather it invents itself, Heaven only knows how. Once it is started, the rumour runs its course, increasing as it goes to truly amazing dimensions. Every one adds something to it and knows all the details of any event, and these details are strangely definite. So in November we heard of the taking of Metz by the French; a German officer had admitted it. We even heard that our officers had given a banquet the night of their triumphant entry. Some time after this an old sergeant-major rushed into his hut, wild with excitement, shouting: "Bravo! The Allies are bombarding Aix-la-Chapelle." He believed,

and we believed, and everybody was happy. English soldiers taken prisoner in November told a story of having seen with their own eyes a body of cavalry surround the Crown Prince's motor and take him prisoner. But perhaps we did not get the story correctly. As to Lille, it was taken at least once a month. These bits of news were always good news, and even when they seemed *à priori* improbable it was always pleasant to hear them passed along.

Besides this purely imaginary news, we had another and more serious source of information. Certain German papers are allowed in camp, and every day an interpreter translates the *communiqués* not only from Berlin, but also those from Paris and Petrograd, for the Boches also publish the allied *communiqués*. At first sight this seems an excellent plan, but it is not loyally carried out, for when the allied official *communiqués* are unfavourable to them the Germans gravely state that "the French *communiqué* is so full of gross falsehoods that it is impossible to publish it."

They therefore said not a word about the battle of the Marne, and prisoners taken in August first heard the good news from men taken in October.

The Germans thought they would take advantage of this wish to know, this thirst for news. They started three papers that they distribute among the prisoners : the *Bruxellois* for the Belgians, the *Journal des Ardennes* for the French, and the *Continental Times* for the English and Russians. They are three gigantic monuments of Teutonic duplicity. Nothing could exceed the audacity and impudence of the lies they print. Every fact is disclosed or shown in a false light ; and they are obviously intended to sow doubt and suspicion in the minds of the unhappy exiles by all foul, cunning and contemptible methods. Among their weapons are bogus " open letters " from French prisoners, addressed to France, and doctored extracts from French newspapers. The editors of these extraordinary papers have no scruples, and every week their printed sheets

are scattered broadcast over Germany, with the sole object of sowing despair and distress.

But the Germans are bound to see the failure of their efforts. The French look upon these papers as the comic press, and the English are quite unmoved. The Russians might perhaps be deceived, if we did not point out the "trail of the German" over all the Russian words and phrases they have put together.

Another way the Boches have of announcing bad news to prisoners is even worse. The place is beflagged at every German success. There are tall flagstaffs at the entrance of the camp, and suddenly we see the German colours hoisted on the pole. All day long these pennons flutter in the wind, and the guards sarcastically point them out to the prisoner, who feels the iron then enter into his soul.

Luckily for us, there are French papers, which are always being smuggled into the camp in spite of all the German precautions. They are read devoutly, the sheets are passed from hand to hand, they circulate through the

camp, and every one tries to read as much as possible into them. Then there are the confirmed optimists, who are never down-hearted, and they also are a stimulant. I shall always gratefully remember a great tall fellow, as thin



as a post, with his beard in the wind, who used to find his way into every corner of the camp, in spite of all the regulations, and who went about saying : “ Good news ! good news ! They say themselves in their own papers that they are absolutely done for.” Even when the news was not so good, this fellow still rushed about

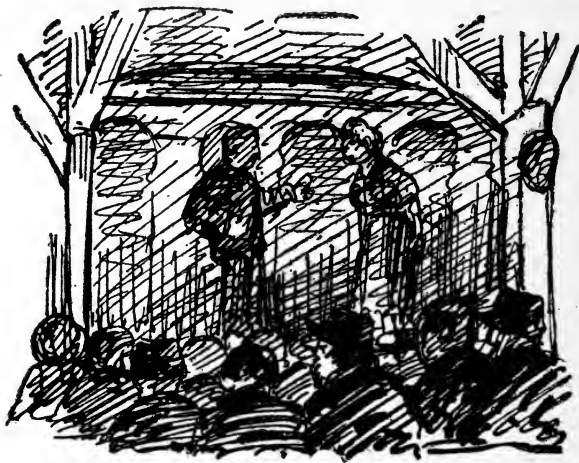
from hut to hut, his sanguine faith still undisturbed, and shouting his "good news." The heroes of the battlefield are known and noted, but exile has its heroes also, who will never be known.

THE THEATRE



AN illustrated poster affixed to a hut announces a performance and gives the songs and the names of the singers. There is also to be a play with costumes and scenery. Shall we look in? At the door is the box-office, behind a table, and a seat costs ten pfennigs. When I produce the coins, the "manager" jumps up with "Oh, not journalists! It would be the first time you paid for your ticket," and takes me behind the scenes. The contrivances are extremely ingenious: the stage itself is made of tables placed side by side, the wings of coverlets hung on the rafters, and the curtain, which is run on a cord, is also a coverlet. There are scenes painted on great sheets of paper joined, and my guide tells

me that in the camp they came from the captain was very interested in these artistic efforts and encouraged them. Their ambition was to play *Le Bossu*, but a superior *Bossu* in



verse. The scenery was painted for this production, and there were four scenes: a terrace and gardens, a state room in a palace, a cottage interior, and riverside scene with a town with its churches and public buildings, showing on the opposite bank. He also showed me baskets full of costumes; and an actor was

painting his face before a glass. It was just like . . .

The performance is just beginning, the house is crowded, and the audience on their benches are impatient to see the curtain drawn. There is a notice that "smoking is prohibited," but everybody is smoking. The vendor of lemonade is moving up and down, calling: "Iced lemonade!" It is very hot, and many honest ruddy faces streaming with sweat will be convulsed with laughter when the farce begins. Finally, the stage manager comes forward with the programme in his hand and announces Monsieur X—— in *Rebecca*. The big fellow who comes on sings the song cleverly enough, every one laughs and encores him, and he sings another song. A curly-headed tenor warbles a ballad, and then writhes in his efforts to sing a mountaineer's song, which has some notes,



la, la, i, tou, which he cannot produce. Singer follows singer in rapid succession, and then Monsieur R——, of the Concert Mayol, is announced. He is got up as a civilian, in a coat with a flower in his button-hole. He



gesticulates, acts, and flutters about just like the original. His songs are truly Parisian—tales about errand-boys. Next comes an imitator of Polin, lurching about the stage, handkerchief in hand, and then “our friend B—— in his Montéhus songs.” This is a stumpy

yellow-haired lad, with a rough, harsh, and ill-controlled voice, who gives us some Montéhus, and then informs us in his Ménilmontant accent: “I am going to give you something of my own on the Boches, that I composed in the trenches in the Argonne; so, if you see any *escargots de sable* looking in, let me know.” He

begins, but before he reaches the end of the first verse, those by the window look round, and an immense Boche comes silently in. The embarrassed singer stops, and the audience



shouts : "Go on, go on ; sing something else." He pulls himself together, and sings a refrain ; the Boche looks on, sniffs the air to see if we have been smoking, and goes out.

At the *entr'acte* we leave the room to get a breath of fresh air. At the door the office gives

us passes, and the vendor of lemonade is busy, as are the vendors of cigars and cigarettes. The audience talk in little groups, or else, as it is Sunday, look on at the male and female Boches in their Sunday best on the other side of the wire fence. The second part of the entertainment is a comedy, played by the authors. In this the costumes and scenery come in, and the laughter is loudest. Sometimes there are acrobats, or boxing and wrestling, or a musical performance by an improvised orchestra. Every camp has its theatre. It is an hour spent in laughing in spite of ourselves, in spite of all, but our laughter does not ring true, and leaves behind it the memory of something a little unworthy and a little ugly.

HOW WE GOT BACK



THE medical service in the German camps was very like the gun of the famous Gervais Alphonse Daudet speaks of : this gun was always being loaded and never went off—
“*toujou lou cargou, part jamai.*”

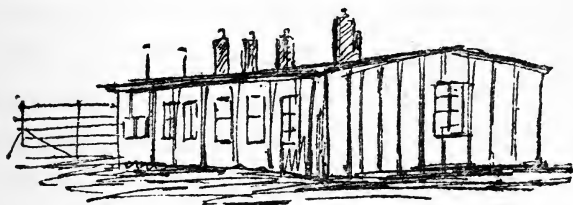
On the very first day of our imprisonment the Germans told us we were only there for a very few days ; then the monotonous weeks and months went by, but every time we gave up hope and had resigned ourselves to our fate, something happened to rouse our spirits ; the door would open a little way and then shut for several months.

Some of the medical service left in November,

a dozen nursing orderlies chosen by lot went from my camp, and the others were to follow, but nothing more was heard. There was also a rumour that the old men and children—we had one man of eighty-two—were to go. The list was made out nearly every week ; it was sent to Berlin and never returned. Then it all began again. Finally, one morning (it was a Sunday) German non-commissioned officers went over the companies with a list, and marched out the boys and old men, herded them together, searched them from head to foot, and then off they went. A train with steam up was waiting and carried them off.

Afterwards a party of wounded went, then a second and a third ; but we were not sure whether they left for France or for another camp ; one party of prisoners left, and others were sent to us, but the medical service still remained. The winter had gone, the spring was almost over, our departure had faded to a distant and beautiful dream, when suddenly, on May 16th, an order came. Four doctors and a

dozen orderlies were to hold themselves in readiness to start at any moment. Lots were drawn, and there was weeping and gnashing of teeth at the result. The list was made out, and we waited, our bags and valises in readiness, for two months. The general a week later



THE FRENCH MEDICAL SERVICE'S HUT.

amused himself by indicating the four surgeon-majors who were to remain behind as the party that was leaving, and *vice versa*; and no one left. Finally, the order came that the entire medical staff was to go with the exception of some poor wretches who remained. It was such wonderful news that we could not believe it; we thought it was a dream. However, early one morning we got up, our baggage was

searched, we were taken to the station and packed into carriages, and the journey began.

When the train stopped, we went on to the platform, where there were civilians, women, and children. We could see them without a wire fence between us ; and at one stopping place there was grass—grass and wild flowers, where we could stretch ourselves at full length. The landscape became wilder and more rugged, with sombre rocks and slate-roofed walls and houses. We were among the mountains of Thuringia. At the stations there were crowds of children, bare-footed and bare-legged, and girls and boys shook their fists at us ; but little we cared. We passed by Bamberg, with its cupolaed churches set on the hills, Furth, and Nuremberg, but it was too dark to see its picturesque buildings. The hours went by in the darkness, and we were too uncomfortable to sleep, but we were too happy to mind. In the morning there was the cathedral of Ulm, with its spire pointing upwards to the clear sky, surrounded by little old Gothic houses

that jostle round it down to the waters of the Danube. The cathedral with its surrounding houses looked like a hen and chickens. Then we saw Lake Constance, and came nearer the frontier. The guard in our carriage was a good fellow, and wished to show there were some decent people in the kingdom of the Boches. As we ran into the station he said good-bye very kindly, with good wishes to us and our friends at home, and then hurried to join his fellow-soldiers, who were marching off the platform with their heavy German tread. It was good to see them go, and we felt less of prisoners. At Constance we felt we were really at the frontier, but they had not finished with us yet. We spent two days in a German barrack. In the parade ground we could see the new recruits in training and being initiated into the mystery of the goose-step. We could feel we were being looked after ; after every meal the canteen-keeper brought us beer, and the day we left an old captain went into each room and asked : " Have you any complaint to

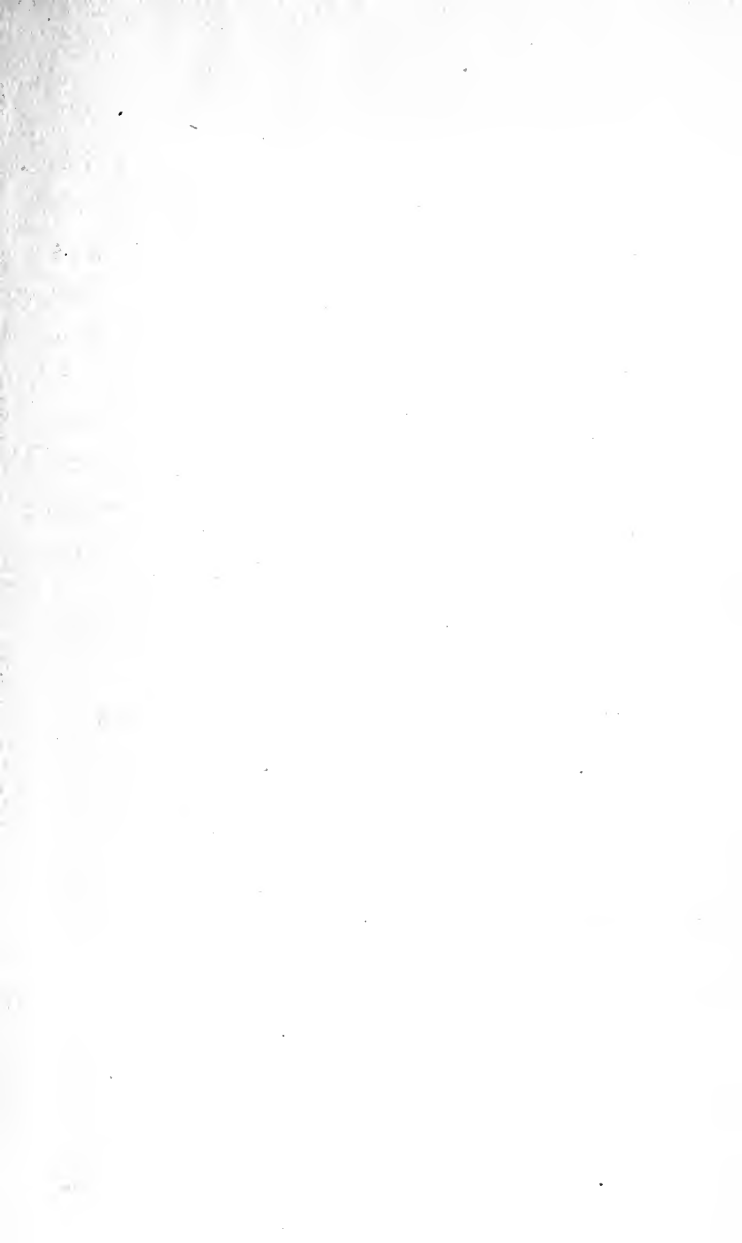
make of your treatment these last two days ? ” These last two days ! That is thoroughly characteristic of the Boche’s mentality.

We were searched again at the station, and then our guards with the pointed helmets left us, and a Swiss officer went through the carriages, saying in French : “ Please sit down, gentlemen, for the inspection.” He called us gentlemen ! The train moved off, and no sooner were we out of the town than we all rushed to the window. People were standing by the line, shouting “ *Vive la France !* ” and waving tricolour flags, while we in turn waved our *képis* and handkerchiefs and sang the *Marseillaise*. We were free, and in Switzerland. There were not many dry-eyed amongst us. Then more tricolour flags, more shouts and cheering. The Swiss soldier in our carriage could not speak a word of French, and it was in German that he told us he wanted to give us a present, and out of his cape came a paper bag full of new white rolls—the first white bread we had touched for nine months.

We were greeted with the same enthusiasm all through the night. A banquet was prepared for us at Zurich; and at Lausanne, Fribourg, Geneva, and everywhere, in spite of the early hour, there were people waiting to shake hands and give us presents of flowers, chocolates, cigars; and notes were thrown into the carriage. It was daylight when we entered France, our fair France. An old white-haired Territorial presented arms, and on the station platform a trumpeter played *Aux Champs*. A company turned out in our honour, and a general received us. It was a great day for us. There were our new soldiers in the new sky-blue uniform we had never seen before, the music of the bugles and drums, and a wild and tremulous emotion made us shout and rush about like madmen. We fingered their coats and knapsacks and rifles and embraced one another. Tables were laid for us, and champagne corks popped; and so we got to Lyons.

We were asked not to express our joy too

loudly, and to moderate our transports, so the train ran into the great station amid a silence more moving than any songs. Bugle calls rent the air ; and when we stepped on to the platform beside the new classes, who looked so young, alert and slim in their new uniforms, we with our old coats, our red trousers, the Hussars' blue pelisses, the flat caps of the Alpine troops, all dirty and torn and ragged, felt like soldiers of an earlier age, returning from some ancient campaign. We were escorted by cuirassiers, the trumpets blared, and we were happy, unimaginably happy and content. A whole horizon of happiness stretched before us ; we were on the way to our homes, our relations and friends ; we were no longer prisoners, but soldiers once again.



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